

## Correspondence

### HOUSE ORGAN THERAPEUTICS

*To the Editor:*—My mail is frequently cluttered with pseudo-scientific data from various manufacturers of proprietary remedies which contain as much real scientific information as the *Police Gazette*. I am enclosing a sample page of such a periodical. The article has been so cleverly worded in the first paragraph, as to impress the unthinking with the idea that sodium cacodylate is superior to arsphenamin, when we know in reality that sodium cacodylate has been proved practically worthless in syphilis (*vide* "Venarsen"). One case is reported, in which twenty injections of sodium cacodylate were administered intravenously, from October 23 to December 14. On December 18, a Wassermann test proved negative, it had been strongly positive on October 20, but during the same interval from October 23 to December 14, the patient had been taking by mouth "Ricord pills" each containing half a grain of yellow iodid of mercury; granted that he had taken these pills regularly, during all that time, it might well be that the Wassermann would be sharply influenced by them. Again, a negative Wassermann in the midst of treatment proves little; it might be positive again in a few days. The article stimulates the further use of a product of known worthlessness in the treatment of syphilis. How any one can use sodium cacodylate in preference to arsphenamin in syphilis is beyond me. If I mistake not, the Propaganda Department has not taken up the matter of these various pamphlets of the drug companies, such as the *Doctor's Factotum*, *Therapeutic Notes*, etc., lauding to the skies such articles as "Seng," "Cactina Pillets," etc., *ad nauseam*. The saddest part of the whole thing is that it must bring returns from the unthinking, otherwise they would soon disappear, which would be a great relief for the scrub-women who empty our waste baskets.

PAUL E. BECHET, M.D., New York.

[COMMENT.—The "sample page" sent by Dr. Bechet is from the March-April, 1918, number of P. D. & Co's. *Therapeutic Notes*. It contains an "Original Communication" on "The Treatment of Syphilis with Sodium Cacodylate, by Adolph Lappner, M.D., Detroit, Mich." The "article" while nominally devoted to the praise of sodium cacodylate is virtually a puff for "Ricord Pills," a Parke, Davis & Co. product.]

### THE CORRECT SHOWER BATH

*To the Editor:*—During recent visits to several camps and forts of the United States Army, I was surprised to discover that all showers were arranged perpendicularly, and that they were so built in accordance with the Quartermaster's Manual, second volume, page 351, despite the fact that the public bathhouses of this country have since their initiation in 1890 proved the absolute superiority of the oblique shower head (at an angle of 45 degrees).

There is no doubt in the minds of those who have given this subject any thought that while the vertical shower may serve equally well for cleansing, it fails in the equally if not more important object of the shower, to furnish the refreshment and invigoration produced by the forcible impact of water on the skin nerves, vessels and muscular structures. Since the latter depends on the force or pressure under which the water is delivered, it is obvious that this beneficent action is precluded because of the fact that no matter how strong the pressure the water falls with force only on the hairy scalps, from which it trickles on the body. The oblique shower, on the contrary, strikes the back, chest or sides, avoiding the head unless the head is intentionally exposed for cleansing.

The great enhancement of efficiency among our industrial workers and our soldiers derivable from the correctly constructed shower cannot at this time be too much emphasized or too quickly brought to the attention of the authorities.

That the antiquated shower head is still in use in the Army and other recently constructed public bath establishments is evidence not only of the force of habit but unfortunately also of the fact that the rationale of the action of water in health and disease is still a *terra incognita* among otherwise well informed men.

There is something more, indeed much more, in the shower bath than its cleansing in a sanitary way, just as there is something more in the cold bath in typhoid fever than temperature reduction (which happily is being recognized of late). That there is something far more important in thermic fever than reduction of abnormally high temperature has been painfully demonstrated by the largest statistics of an epidemic (648 cases) which I endeavored to utilize as a lesson (Principles and Practice of Hydrotherapy, William Wood & Co.) in 1898. And yet the fifteenth edition of the most popular American textbook on practice still teaches the heresy that reduction of temperature by the cold bath is the best treatment of thermic fever (although the German translation of the eighth edition has a footnote exposing this fallacy), and nearly every textbook on practice teaches the same fallacious and fatal treatment. It may be mentioned, incidentally, that the cold shower or affusion reduced the mortality from this disease from 38 to 6 per cent.

It is gratifying to state that the Surgeon-General of the United States Army, and its Quartermaster-General and the head of the Bureau of Industrial Housing, have taken cognizance of my appeal to them for correction of this physiologically incorrect construction of the shower.

SIMON BARUCH, M.D., New York.

### "SODIUM VERSUS POTASSIUM"

*To the Editor:*—Your editorial in the issue of June 1 on "Sodium Versus Potassium" is both illuminating and suggestive, and illustrates the point that our boche friends have been working the American public in a manner that is shameful in this matter of the potassium salts. As you say, we are creatures of habit, and their clever propagandists have taken advantage of this to persuade us that the K salts are superior to those of the Na group, whereas, quite the contrary, the latter group is every bit as effective and less depressing. In order to obviate this fallacy I would suggest that you keep standing on your editorial page some such brief text as the following:

American doctors should

#### HELP WIN THE WAR

by prescribing sodium salts for the States and let the Prussians prescribe potassium salts for Potsdam! Sodium is produced in America, is less depressing than potassium, is quite as effective, and is 50 per cent. cheaper!

You no doubt could influence other medical journals and also the chemical and pharmaceutical publications to follow your example and thus help materially in putting the Hun out of business.

WILLIAM D. BYRNE, M.D., Chicago.

### ADVANTAGES GAINED BY SERVICE IN MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS

*To the Editor:*—Are there many of our young physicians hesitating about entering the service? The recent letter appearing in the medical press from the office of the Surgeon-General asking for more medical men has, I believe, met a generous response. However, having spent a week here as the guest of the surgical staff of the base hospital, I have been impressed with the advantages there are for those who enter the service. No postgraduate course can equal it. No clinic is as complete in system and organization. It is the realization of any physician's fondest hopes. It is going to give America a splendidly improved medical profession. It teaches a system of efficiency that will be an asset after returning to civil practice. It is surely worth the while.

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